Writing the Body: Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Salman Rushdie.

Synopsis

Jaison P. Jacob

'Writing the body' is an expression that alludes to the various ways in which the body is represented in literature and art. It also makes one ponder about what the body represents. Both these questions have occupied a central position in the history of human civilization since its beginning. There are plenty of anthropological evidence pertaining to the early man's efforts to depict life and reality around him, which have got embodied in the form of stone and wooden carvings, cave paintings and various forms of worship in which human body was the locus of attention. The body has also been the locus of various power operations, which gradually developed into an elaborate power structure having so many ramifications; the ruler and the ruled, the male and the female, the privileged and the unprivileged being a few among them.

One who is patient enough to analyse the history of human civilization could easily discern that humanity has adopted various perspectives from time to time on the social and cultural role the human body is supposed to play. During the pre-Socratic era, the

body, especially the female body, was venerated. There was no separation between mind and body. Body was considered invested with the power of fertility and reproduction, and therefore became the pivot around which the whole worldly phenomena was aligned. But later, the attitude changed. In the post-Socratic era, the mind-body dichotomy was established, and the bodily principle was assigned an inferior position. Christianity and the rise of patriarchal order in the middle ages promoted this attitude. Renaissance, Romanticism and Modernism left other milestones in the approach to the body, its conceptualization and representation.

The present study attempts to analyse the works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Salman Rushdie, two twentieth century Third World writers, with an eye on the treatment of the body. Despite the fact that these two writers share much affinity between them, the work is not an exact comparison. It simply traces the ways in which these two writers use body as a tool in their hands to address some basic questions such as that of power, patriarchy, gender, attempts at subversion and the postcolonial experience.

Though both are prolific writers and have produced a great volume of creative output, due to thematic reasons, this dissertation is limited mainly to five works: *One Hundred Years of Solitude, The*

Autumn of the Patriarch and *Love in the Time of Cholera* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* by Salman Rushdie. Of course, some passing reference is made to some other works, for example, *Memories of My Melancholy Whores* by Marquez. The first chapter introduces the theoretical background and the authors. The second chapter traces different perspectives on the body from early civilizations to the present time. The third chapter traces the postcolonial element in the context of the body. The fourth chapter tries to find out how the body is used as a metaphor for power, domination, self-assertion, loss of identity and culture, and revolt. It also analyses how the metaphoric use of the body leads to the creation of a subtext. The fifth chapter concentrates on how the treatment of the body by these authors engenders the carnivalesque, and ultimately leads to the creation of an ideology of the libertine. The sixth chapter concludes the thesis.